

The Menshevik jumped from his chair. "General Kornilov has already taken a corps from the Northern Front and sent it against Petrograd."

"That is sheer nonsense!" I shouted. "What corps is it?"

"The Third Cavalry!"

"There is no such corps on the Northern Front!"

Chkheidze said meditatively, "That is strange. Did not the Commander of the Northern Front, along with other front commanders, promise Kornilov full support?"

"If he did, I have heard nothing about it," I replied. "However, General Klembovsky is a notorious fool, and he might have promised Kornilov anything. But this I do know: No troops will obey him if he orders them to march against the Soviets or the government."

Chkheidze showed me a bundle of papers. "Read these. Then you will know what is going on here." The papers were copies of telegrams, appeals, communiqués. They told a fantastic story of mutiny by the Supreme Commander against the government.

Kerensky and Kornilov had hated and distrusted each other for the good reason that each regarded himself alone as the man predestined to save Russia. With two would-be Napoleons, one in Petrograd and the other in Mogilev, and both surrounded by unsavory characters, political intrigue filled the air. Counterrevolutionary circles in Mogilev plotted a coup to establish the military dictatorship of Kornilov, while Kerensky dreamed of getting rid of the Communists, the Soviets, and the intractable generals in Mogilev. Both candidates lacked the three features that had brought Napoleon to power—genius, the halo of victory, and devoted troops—but each had worked himself into a state of mind in which such trifles did not count.

Kerensky had persuaded himself he would save Russia if he had troops of his own, independent of the revolutionary Soviets and committees. He believed Kornilov could provide him with such troops. It became an obsession with him to coax the Supreme Commander to put at his disposal some wholly reliable regiments—as if the general had them and could manipulate them at his will. With this purpose in mind, he sent Savinkov to Mogilev to persuade Kornilov to dispatch his shock troops to Petrograd.

Later, Kerensky pretended that the Provisional Government had decided on September 3 to begin preparations to transfer the government to Moscow and to bring from the front a reliable task force to be placed at the government's disposal. No record of this decision has been found, and none of the ministers remembered discussion of such plans in the Cabinet. During the investigation of the so-called Kornilov affair, Kerensky explained that this was not a formal decision